

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN P. MARTIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 2627, TO AMEND THE NATIONAL PARKS SYSTEM ADVISORY BOARD ACT.

MAY 16, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's comments on S. 2627, the National Park System Advisory Board Act of 2006, a bill to extend the authorization and improve the composition of board members of the National Park System Advisory Board (Board).

The Department supports S. 2627, which is similar to a proposal transmitted to Congress by the Administration on December 7, 2005. The Department wishes to thank Senator Domenici for sponsoring this legislation at the Department's request.

The National Park System Advisory Board was first authorized in 1935 under the Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act. The Board advises the Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior on matters relating to the National Park Service, including the administration of the Historic Sites, Buildings, and the Antiquities Act; the designation of national historic landmarks and national natural landmarks; and the national historic significance of proposed national historic trails. The Board may advise on matters submitted to the Board by the Director, as well as any other issues identified by the Board.

The Board's membership consists of no more than 12 individuals selected from citizens of the United States having demonstrated commitment to the mission of the National Park Service, and representing various geographic regions, including each of the seven administrative regions of the National Park Service. The Board has provided exemplary service to the Director of the National Park Service and works cooperatively with the Director to ensure the preservation of this Nation's important natural and historic places for future generations of Americans.

The Board is an active body currently engaged on a broad front of issues, meeting quarterly and consulting regularly with the Director. Recent accomplishments and ongoing efforts include:

- The Board regularly considers recommendations from its National Historic Landmarks Committee about properties the committee wishes the Board would recommend to the Secretary for designation as National Historic Landmarks.
- Last year, the Senate passed Senator Thomas's "Heritage Partnership Act" (S. 243), which incorporated recommendations from a Board report. The Act would create a system of National Heritage Areas and clarify the relationship of those areas to the National Park Service.
- The Board just completed an advisory report to the Director recommending that the National Park Service undertake a series of pilot projects to test, measure and validate the premise that the national parks contribute to healthy lifestyle through active participation in park-based recreational activities. This report supports the President's *HealthierUS* initiative and Executive Order 13266, which calls on federal agencies to increase the accessibility of resources for physical activity.
- In support of President Bush's call to help, "restore civic and historical understanding throughout American Society," the Board recently convened a panel of prominent American historians and scholars. The panel counseled the National Park Service about its education/interpretive mission and ways in which the program offered visitors at parks and historic sites can advance the President's goal.
- Next week, the Board will review and advise the Director on the National Park Service's proposed final revision of *NPS Management Policies*. Participating in this assessment will be several former National Park Service Directors and past Park Service senior executives.

S. 2627 proposes amending the Board's statutory authorization in four areas. The first area would modify the membership to the Board. This would be done by requiring at least four members to have expertise in the fields of history, archeology, anthropology,

historical or landscape architecture, biology, ecology, geology, marine science or social science; three members to have expertise and prior experience in management of National or State parks or protected areas or natural or cultural resources management; three members to have expertise in any other professional or scientific discipline important to the mission of the National Park Service; at least one member to have expertise in historic recreational opportunities within units of the National Park System; and at least one member to be an elected official from an area adjacent to or within close proximity to a unit of the National Park System. The second area would require that the Advisory Board members adhere to ethics and conflict of interest provisions by removing the current law's exemption. The third area extends the authority of the Board to 2016. A fourth area of revision provides for technical amendments. The Department supports the amendments, which will increase the Board's overall effectiveness and influence and improve clarity and ease of reference.

The National Park System Advisory Board is an invaluable partner of the Department as we both carry out the national vision that created the National Park System 90 years ago. Throughout that time, the Department and the Board have worked effectively and collegially together to enhance conservation efforts across the nation. The Department looks forward to continuing this relationship with the Board as we strive to position the NPS for its next 100 years.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.